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LIFE AND DEATH IN CHRIST.

A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH OF MRS. MARY CODMAN,

DELIVERED IN THE

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SECOND CHURCH, DORCHESTER,

APRIL 12, 1857,

BY

REV. JAMES HOWARD MEANS,
Pastor of the Second Church.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1857.

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Dec 15, 1869

TO THE REV. JAMES H. MEANS:

Dear Sir,—At a meeting of the members of the Second Parish in Dorchester, held after divine service this afternoon, the undersigned were appointed a Committee, to request a copy for publication, of the Sermon preached by you this morning, on the life and death of the late Mrs. CODMAN. We, therefore, would most sincerely desire that our request may be granted, because we think it would be very gratefully received by your Church and Society, and be a memorial of the past, worthy to be kept in remembrance.

Respectfully and truly yours,

MARSHALL P. WILDER,
ROSWELL GLEASON,
THOMAS TREMLETT,
CHARLES HOWE,
JOSEPH CLAPP,
JAMES C. SHARP,
COMMITTEE.

Dorchester, April 12, 1857.

TO THE HON. M. P. WILDER AND OTHERS:

Gentlemen:—I herewith transmit to you the Sermon you have asked for publication. Laboring under the great disadvantage of never having known Mrs. CODMAN, till the days of her vigor were closing, I have been chiefly dependent on the observations of others. Still, it has been a sincere pleasure, to try to do honor to one who did so much for our Church and Society, and with an affectionate hand to pay my humble tribute to her worth.

Very cordially, your Friend and Pastor,

J. H. MEANS.

Dorchester, April 20, 1857.

Jona. French Esq
Apr. 13, 1868

SERMON.

PHILIPPIANS I. 21.

FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.

THE faith and experience of more than twenty years of a devoted Christian life, found expression in these words. They show us the source of the Apostle's activity, the secret of his power. Christ was the beginning and the end of his life. Six or eight years before, he had written to the Galatians in a similar strain. "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

In this experience Paul is a pattern for all believers. He ascended in a lofty path, beckoning to them to follow. By the grace which bringeth salvation, they may all enjoy the same blessed, abiding union with the Redeemer; so that to them, 'to live shall be Christ, and to die be gain.'

"To live is Christ." This implies, first, *a life for Christ.* Such was Paul's. "What wilt thou, Lord, have me to do?" was his first inquiry after his renewal, and he never lost sight of Him who then appeared in his glory. When he labored at tent-making with Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth, he had respect to the same end which he pursued in labors more directly spiritual. "All this I do, for the gospel's sake." There was not a power of his body, not a faculty of his mind, not a moment of his time, which was not laid, a sacrifice, upon the altar.

Such may be our lives also—entirely for Jesus. All are not Apostles—all are not preachers—all are not moving amid conspicuous scenes, or engaged in sacred acts; but love to Christ may be the ever-present, animating motive, which shall mould and color every thing that is done. Jesus may be as really near to us by the fireside, or in the market-place, as in the sanctuary; a Christian wife and mother may order her domestic concerns, and the nurture of her children, with reference to the advancement of his kingdom, as truly as a missionary for that end goes forth among the heathen. As a temple is built not only with massive blocks, regularly laid, but with thousands of smaller stones, hidden from sight, and with mortar, composed of innumerable grains of sand; so our unnumbered acts, great and trifling, conspicuous and concealed,

may be all combined in a life, having a unity of purpose, sanctified for the Master's use and glory.

And we are bound thus to live for Christ. For this, he redeemed us. He stands before us, with pierced hands and side, crowned with thorns, his face furrowed by care and grief, saying, 'Go, carry on my work; live for that cause for which I died; by all you owe to me, by all your convictions of the truth of the gospel and all your confidence in my power to help you, by the worth of souls as precious as your own, be faithful in my service, unto death.' And the loving, thankful disciple, obediently devotes himself to this work; and so, 'for him to live is Christ.'

But this is not all. These words denote further, *a life in Christ.* This also was Paul's experience. He lived *for* Christ, because he lived *in* him. "I can do all things," he said, "through Christ who strengtheneth me." All his affections centered in that living Friend; all his aspirations tended towards him. "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And when, in his letters to his beloved converts, he unveiled his heart's most private emotions, we find every page fragrant, as with ointment poured forth, with His precious name.

So may we dwell in Jesus; so must we, if we would make high attainments in piety. He is set forth in Scripture, as sustaining multiform relations

to us. He is our teacher, our high priest, our sacrifice, our intercessor, our judge and king, the rock of our refuge, our friend, our strength, our consolation, the bread and water of life, our portion, the resurrection and life, our '*all in all.*' Oh, the depth of wisdom and love that are here! To whom else could we apply such endearing names? What want have we, which he cannot satisfy? How needful that we should seek the closest union, press to his embrace, and, into the very recesses of his heart, seek to have our natural life supplanted by the spiritual life that is in him, as the fruitful juices of the vine flow through all its branches. When we hope he has forgiven our sins, we only *begin* to know him; we see but one of the lustrous points of the priceless jewel, and there are a hundred more; and if it is so transporting to hear his word of pardon, what must it be to listen to his accents of love, our heart resting on his, and partaking of his infinite fullness.

The closest earthly union is that of wedded life. Sweet is it, to feel there is one, from whom we have no thoughts to hide, whom we can never distrust, who will share every sorrow and every joy. Behold, I show you a mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the Church. They are no more twain, but one; and God has joined them. Read Christian biographies, if you would understand this life in Christ. See in the diary, written for no

public eye, the record of communings with him—so pure, so rapturous, so elevating, yet so real. The last book read to that friend whose loss we deplore to-day, was the Memoir of Mrs. Mary Winslow. She was so interested in it, that after the pains of her last sickness had seized her, its perusal was finished by one sitting at her bedside. And there we find such entries as these: "The Lord has most preciously drawn near to my soul. This morning I held sweet communion with him. My mouth was opened wide to make great demands on his love. I felt I had not only his ear, but his blessed countenance shone upon me." And again: "Still going on my way, leaning on my Beloved. No tongue can tell how precious Jesus is. Language often fails, when I am on my knees, to tell him how much I love him. My soul is kept near him. I often have him in full view."

What a blessed state! How is such an one lifted above all anxieties and fears. Troubles may come, bereavements, losses; pains may rack the mortal body; but all can be borne through the imparted strength of Christ. Amid the pressure of daily cares, there is a living, personal Helper, always near. Sin may still at times prevail, oppressing the spirit; but the penitent looks to the great Redeemer, and the burden is gone. Many duties are to be performed; but here is an impulse to activity that can never fail. Truly, for such an

one "to live, is Christ." Yet how few Christians know, by experience, the full blessedness of such a life, or the power for good it would impart!

We turn now to the other clause of the Apostle's declaration: "To DIE IS GAIN." It is not so to all; death, in itself, is the penalty of sin, and it comes attended with gloom, the king of terrors. But to one who has lived for and in Christ, those terrors are destroyed. He would not live here always; to depart is far better.

For, first, *he is relieved from all his sorrows and pains.* His happiness here has not been uninterrupted. God sees fit to chasten most severely, even those he loves. And while any sin remains unsubdued, there must be a wearisome, humbling conflict. But after death, the struggle ceases. The body, that had become but an encumbrance, is left behind; the soul awakes in the likeness of the spotless Saviour. Conflicts, bereavements, the rude assault of foes, foreboding fears, the upbraidings of conscience, grief for the sins of others, belong only to the past. All tears are wiped away; nothing dims the prospect of unceasing progress from glory unto glory.

Again, beyond the grave *the fondest anticipations of the Christian are realized.* Here he walks by faith, not by sight. He receives an earnest of the inheritance, but not the possession itself. Re-

minded by continual changes that this is not his home, he is in a state of expectancy. His thoughts and desires reach forward to that which is to come. The day of his death puts him in possession of all. He is like the heir attaining his majority. Is it a fit time for song and festivity when the master of an estate becomes of age? Then congratulate the Christian, when he dies. Did he long to know more of God? His works and ways, from the beginning, are opened to view. Did he long to do more for God? He is endowed with strength that shall never be exhausted, nor need even temporary repose. Did he desire a purer society than he could find on earth? He walks with prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the redeemed of every age and land. Did he pray to be made perfect? The robes of the angels are not whiter than his own.

Above all, his *union with Christ is perfected.* He sees him as he is. When Christ shows but a glimpse of his glory to a disciple here, he is overwhelmed; but there they are able to look upon that ineffable brightness. And Christ calls his follower to his side, a welcome beaming from every feature. He explains to him the mysteries of his earthly life; he makes him a partaker of his own eternal counsels; he enlarges that follower's soul with his own divine sympathies and conceptions. And never, through eternal ages, shall that holy, blissful intercourse have an end. From that glori-

ous presence, he shall never go out. Oh, thus to be with Jesus is gain—inexpressible, infinite gain. No joy is to be compared to this. We hope to meet our friends who have preceded us; but how far better will it be to meet Jesus! And when we repose in the sunshine of his presence—wondering that *we*, who have been so unworthy, should be there, yet knowing that it is no illusion, but we are safe forever—then there must rush in an overflowing tide of rapture, making all earthly joys contemptible.

And is it *death* that thus enriches us? Then, welcome death! Why should we fear it? Or why weep, when one who lived in Christ is taken away?

We do *not* weep for the dead to-day. This service is not that we may pour our tears upon her grave, though our loss is indeed great;—it is that we may learn the lesson of her life and death—that since she can now do us no other service, she may bless us by her example.

Let me then present—what some of you know better than myself—a simple narration of what she was, and what she did.

Mary Wheelwright was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, March 19, 1792. Her father was Ebenezer Wheelwright, a respected merchant of that town, who died but recently at the age of ninety-

two years. Her mother was the daughter of William Coombs, a gentleman of the highest respectability and devoted piety. She was early trained in the fear of God, and instructed in that confession of faith which shaped her theology through life, the Assembly's Catechism. Naturally intelligent, sprightly, and with warm affections, she was surrounded in her early, as in her later years, by closely attached friends. Her career of benevolence commenced in childhood. It is remembered, that when but ten years old, in her sympathy for a poverty-stricken family, she obtained leave of her mother to take to them as much as she could carry. Her good will exceeded her strength, and she loaded herself so heavily, that after going a short distance, she was forced to obtain the aid of one of her companions. The act was prophetic; it was not the only time that, in helping others, she went beyond her strength. On returning home, she was much troubled lest she had exceeded the permission given, to take all *she* could carry; and, with that tender conscientiousness which she always showed, sought her mother's forgiveness.

But though her opening character was thus amiable and lovely, she felt her need of the renewing of the Spirit. When about fourteen years of age, and at school at Bradford, during a revival of religion in that place, she hoped that she passed from

death unto life. Harriet Atwood, (afterwards Mrs. Newell,) and Ann Hasseltine, (afterwards Mrs. Judson,) were her sympathizing companions. Together they sorrowed, prayed and rejoiced. Miss Wheelwright was led to a trembling hope, only after many weeks of anxiety. Miss Atwood enjoyed a brighter experience; and one day, when seated on the grass, beside her friend, plucked an humble wild-flower, and said, "Mary, I now see more of the glory of God in this little flower, than I saw before in the whole creation." It is pleasant to think of these three, thus entering together on the service of Christ—all alike gifted with unusual force of character, and all destined to exert a wide and most blessed influence as the wives of ministers, though in different spheres. United they were in life's morning; and now, though thousands of miles separate their graves, they are once more together.

A short time after her residence in Bradford,—on the 7th of May, 1808,—she united, by profession, with the First Presbyterian Church in her native town, of which Dr. Dana was then Pastor. A few years passed by, in the retirement of home, marked by diligent self-culture, by a striking development of Christian graces, and by an ever-active benevolence.

When about twenty years of age, she became acquainted with Dr. Codman, while he was visiting at the house of her grandfather. The young Pas-

tor had gone thither, to seek advice and aid, amid the perplexities which were then so heavily pressing upon him. He found more than he was seeking; and, by a blessed compensation, that severest trial of his life became the occasion of his gaining his life's greatest comfort and joy.

On the 19th of January, 1813, she was married; and then commenced that career of earnest, self-denying, unwearied activity among this people, which your sorrowing hearts conceive far better than my poor words can describe. I shrink from using the language of eulogy; she herself forbade it;—but as I have looked back upon her course here, and gathered the testimony of the rich and the poor; of those who remember her as the loved friend of their youth; of those by whose sick-bed she watched so devotedly; of those whom her liberal hand supplied; of those whom, as inquirers, she pointed with equal skill and fidelity to the sinner's Friend; of those with whom she so tenderly sympathized in the hour of affliction;—as I have heard but one testimony from all; as I looked, on Tuesday last, at that large assembly gathered at her funeral, very many of them drawn hither by no claim of relationship, by no official duty, but coming because their full hearts longed to pay the last tribute of affection and respect—I have felt that she was one, concerning whom strong language of praise could be justified, and one whom

it was a duty to hold up for the incitement of others, and that the Saviour, for whom she lived, might be glorified.

I shall not attempt any regular narrative of the events of her life. It was not marked by striking incidents. Three of her children she was called to resign in infancy, though in other respects her domestic life was signally happy. Twice—in 1825 and 1835—she visited Europe, seeking out spots of sacred or classic interest, and enjoying the society of a large circle of Christian friends. But the greater part of her active life was passed in the assiduous discharge of duty in her home, and in the parish of her husband, in all whose interests and labors, she felt a most lively sympathy.

She had remarkable endowments for the station she was called to fill—a vigorous constitution and diversified natural gifts, all assiduously improved, and sacredly devoted to Christ.

One marked characteristic was *her great executive power.* Said one who knew her intimately for many years, "She performed a greater amount and variety of labor than any woman I ever knew." The cares of a household, where not only a large family were nurtured, but a most open hospitality always reigned, were of themselves enough for the strength of most. But when we add to these her labors in the Sabbath school, where for many years she was a teacher; in the praying

circle; in the maternal and benevolent associations; in the many homes of the parish, especially the abodes of want or sorrow, and the chambers of sickness; and also her correspondence and other efforts, by which her influence was extended over a still wider sphere—we do not merely say, 'She did what she could,' but we are filled with wonder that she could do so much.

She was untiring in improving opportunities for doing good. She accomplished what she did, not so much by the advantages of her position, as by a spirit which would have made her eminently useful in any place. When traveling and among strangers, for example, though never forward, she was always ready to commend the truth she loved. Seeing in a tavern an oath scratched upon a window, she at once broke out the pane of glass, and, sending for the landlord, explained her conduct, and offered remuneration. Coming at another time from New York in the steamboat, she became interested in the appearance of a lady, evidently very ill. Unable to rest, because of her solicitude, she rose at midnight, offered to relieve the nurse; and while watching over the stranger, poured into her willing ear the promises and hopes of the gospel, the preciousness of which seemed to be felt, in a dying hour, three days later.

In England, her intercourse with Christian friends was made the occasion of stimulating them to new

works of piety; and not only Mrs. Sherman, of Surrey Chapel, but many others, confessed the impulse they received. It is believed that the first maternal association in Great Britain was instituted at her suggestion. Amid the gaieties of France, she was the same consistent Christian; and I have heard of one French lady of culture, though without piety, led by her example, to admit the surpassing beauty of a religious life.

Her influence over others was greatly increased, by her *most remarkable conversational talent.* In this, she had no superior. A memory of rare retentiveness, enriched by the results of varied reading and wide observation, gave her the material; and this was used by a mind quick and ardent, clear and firm in its convictions, and ever guided by an exquisite tact, which showed her just what to say, and how to make just the impression she desired.* She gave advice, reproof, instruction, without seeming to do so; perhaps under the guise of a quaint saying or an anecdote, which carried its own application. A genial humor, and a keen sense of the ludicrous, which

* She was once visited by an individual, in a state of morbid depression, in view of his sins. Pointing to an engraving, hanging on the wall, of a preacher with uplifted hands, he said, "It seems to me that that man is lifting up his hands in astonishment, that I can expect to be saved." "No," was her instant and adroit reply, "he is only astonished that you should have *any doubt* that the Saviour is ready to accept you."

she used without abusing, enlivened her speech, and made her not only an instructive, but a most entertaining companion. With no effort to attract others, she would often gather round her a crowd of delighted listeners, spell-bound by her beaming eye and fluent tongue. Especially did children love to listen. She could talk to them by the hour; when memory failed, imagination would supply instructive stories, and many remember their intercourse with her as chief among their juvenile delights. She had the rare power of conversing easily on religious themes, even with the irreligious. She did not force in pious remarks; they came, like the free outgushing of the stream from the fountain, from the fullness of a Christian heart.

She could adapt herself to any station or age; stand self-possessed in the presence of the great, conciliate those opposed, instruct the wise, as well as the ignorant; talk of theology with divines, or of domestic economy with the young housewife; pass from the mansion to the cottage, 'as gracefully as the sunlight descends from the mountain's majestic summit, to the little floweret at its base.' And this power lasted till the very end of life. Yes, when multiplied infirmities had almost done their work, her face would still brighten with the fascinating smile it used to wear, and the

enthusiasm of other days show itself, unconquered by disease.

And yet, the source of her greatest power was not in the gifts of nature, but of *grace*. She lived as she did, and accomplished her great work, because *Christ lived in her*. The advantages of wealth and social position were hers, but her faith overcame the world. As her convictions of sin were deep and thorough at the first, so all through life she was a most humble Christian. If men did not notice her faults, she felt that in God's sight she was a great sinner; and at times she even distrusted the soundness of her hope.

This led her to cling to the Bible with ardent attachment, to meditate on its promises, to commit to memory not only single verses, but entire chapters. This led her to take special delight in those old writers — like Baxter and Flavel and Owen and Newton — most accustomed to deal with Christian experience. This made the doctrines of grace—the atonement of Christ, the completeness of the believer's justification in him, the abiding presence of the Comforter, inexpressibly dear. This made her constant in prayer, so that when she led the devotions of her female friends, it was evident to all that she was wont to dwell very near to God. And the result of all was a character, that won universal respect and

confidence, that swayed all by the resistless might of goodness.

Thoughtlessness was rebuked in her presence. The cavils of unbelief were felt to be out of place there. Religion, illustrated by that cheerful, earnest, loving disciple, appeared in its own attractive beauty, commanding the praise of all. She was interesting in person, she had strong mental powers; but the impression she left on others, was not so much of these gifts, as of the graces of the Christian. "I never met her," said one of her husband's bosom friends, "when she failed to impress the conviction that she lived with God." "The hues of another world," said another minister, "seemed to blend with her words and actions, giving them almost more than mortal power." Yes, here was the hiding of her strength; her life was hid with Christ in God.

She never moved out of woman's proper sphere, but tell me, ye who would thrust woman upon the platform and arena of public strife, how could one desire or perform a nobler, higher work? Appearing to be just what she was, a gifted, warm-hearted, sensitive lady, devoted to Christ; faithful at home; 'looking well to the ways of her household, and eating not the bread of idleness;' faithful in the church of God, by example, by the alms-deeds which she did, by her love for all fellow-Christians; faithful in the world, holding forth, wherever she

went, the word of life,—hers was an influence which shall endure, when the fruits of noisy and ostentatious lives have perished forever.

And as thus in Christ she lived, so also in Christ she died. Twelve or fifteen years ago, her health began to fail. She had, in her noble zeal, gone beyond her strength, and her constitution was giving way. That nervous system, so mysteriously arranged, instinct with such subtle life, became diseased, and no human skill could attune again its thousand disordered chords. After the great trial of her life, which removed from her a husband so true and devoted, which so changed the hue of all earthly things that she could say, as did Beza after the death of Calvin, "Now is life less sweet and death less bitter," the malady increased, so that her public labors, her visits to her friends and to the house of God, gradually ceased.

Her thoughts now reverted to the home and scenes of her younger days. Her parents, nearly at the age of fourscore years and ten, were yet living; and she transferred her residence to her native town. Year after year passed, of weakness and pain; but, by God's blessing, no cloud rested upon her mind. It was a great change for one used to so active a life, so much more ready to minister, than to be assisted; but who ever heard her complain? Days and nights of weariness were appoint-

ed her, but she seemed to have only a sense of the goodness of her heavenly Father. Retaining a deep interest in those among whom she had lived, sending often to them messages and tokens of affection; cheered by evidences of the esteem with which she was cherished, and of the respect felt widely for the memory of him, with whom she had been so intimately associated; reading, or having read, her old favorite authors, and the best religious publications of the day, especially works of biography; communing with Milton and Cowper and Watts, and other masters of sacred song; listening to her husband's sermons, when forced to pass her Sabbaths at home; and finding, in the stored-up treasures of God's word, comfort and instruction in the wakeful hours of night, and whenever unable to read the sacred pages; with pleasant, thronging memories of the past, and cheerful hopes for the future, she spent the evening of life serenely, in a manner illustrating the value of religion as signally, as it was shown in her days of power.

And yet, it was better for her to depart and be with Christ. There were seasons of mental gloom, and also of great physical suffering; and at times, oppressed and bowed down, she quoted the sentiment of Robert Hall, that 'heaven appeared exceedingly attractive to her, as a place of rest.' Believing firmly in the recognition of friends hereafter, she loved to think of a reunion with him

who had gone before. Often of late has she described her situation in the words of Dr. Watts:

"My cheerful soul, now all the day,
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks through the ruins of her clay,
And practices her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies,
The fair inheritance in light
Beyond created skies."

Naturally, and in other years, she had a dread of dying; but when the time came, that fear was entirely removed. Death was welcome; and though hardly conscious during the closing days of life, she had made every preparation before, and was waiting to die;—no, not to *die*—to be clothed with immortality—to lay aside the shattered tabernacle, and enter the mansion Jesus had prepared.

On Saturday, the 4th of April, at the age of sixty-five, her mortal life ended. Can we mourn? For her 'to live was Christ, and to die was gain.' In our memory shall her image ever abide; but not the recollection of her weakness and decline. No; we shall see her as she was, by the help of God, in the days of her zeal and strength. Her words, so wise, so loving, will sound again in our ears. Her Christian walk shall be our pattern. And that grace by which she overcame, and to which, could she speak to us, she would point,

as to what alone should be magnified this day—that *all-sufficient* grace we will seek. That were a better tribute to her worth, than all our flowing tears.

Permit me now, in behalf of this people, to tender to the Children of the departed, the assurances of our heartfelt sympathy. I have not spoken of what your Mother was to *you*. You need no such suggestions. These are themes with which no stranger should intermeddle; and I felt that I should best consult your feelings, by leaving the privacy of your favored home undisturbed. Known now on earth only to you, are its scenes of fireside piety, the admonitions and prayers of paternal and maternal love. Richer are you in such memories than in any other legacy. May you be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises!

Members of this Church and Society:—You will be thankful to God for the *life in Christ* exhibited by her who, for more than thirty-five years, dwelt among you. She was indeed your friend. Who of you has not received from her some word or deed of kindness? When, in the hour of trial, was she not near to your side? Then, by the love you bore her, imitate all that was excellent and Christlike in her life. You cannot copy precisely

its outward form; but her spirit you may possess; for it was the spirit of Christ. By prayer, by humble, self-renouncing, appropriating faith, by constant struggle and endeavor, she attained; and the way she trod is open to you. A finished Christian life is a call to the living. It is a proof God gives us of the truth of his promises. It is a manifestation to us of his power to save. We are culpable if we profit not by its lessons.

Shall she come then, from yonder grave, to bear witness against you? Or, when that worn-out body shall be made glorious in the resurrection, will you appear with her, among the faithful followers of Christ?

HYMN,

SUNG AT THE CLOSE OF THE SERMON.

Sweet the repose of twilight's hour,
As gently sinks the setting sun;
No clouds around th' horizon lower,
Night has her starry reign begun.

But night has shrouded earth alone;
The orbs of heaven break into day,
And countless worlds before unknown,
The loss of one dark world repay.

Thus calmly has her evening closed,
Whose day was so serenely bright,
Beyond the bounds of earth reposed,
Still shedding her celestial light.

The many mansions of the skies,
Which to her Father's house belong,
Open their portals for the prize
Borne upward by the angel throng.

Dust unto dust! Her ashes rest,
With cherished dust beneath the ground;
While in those mansions of the blest
Her spirit has his spirit found.

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE

FUNERAL OF MRS. MARY CODMAN,

DORCHESTER, APRIL 7, 1857.

BY REV. A. C. THOMPSON,
Pastor of the Eliot Church, Roxbury.

REV. A. C. THOMPSON:

Dear Sir,—On the last Sabbath, Rev. James H. Means, our Pastor, preached a Discourse, having reference to the death of the late Mrs. CODMAN. At a meeting of the Parish, held immediately after divine service, a Committee was appointed, to request a copy of the Sermon for publication.

A general desire having been expressed that your Address, delivered on the occasion of her funeral, might be printed in connection with the Sermon, I am requested, by the Committee, to ask of you a copy for this purpose.

In returning you my own thanks for your warm tribute of regard and affection to the memory of one whom we so much loved, I do but express the sentiment and feeling of all.

In behalf of the Committee, I am very truly yours,

JAMES C. SHARP.

Dorchester, April 16, 1857.

JAMES C. SHARP, Esq.:

Dear Sir,—Agreeably to your request, of the 16th instant, in behalf of a Committee of the Second Congregational Parish in Dorchester, I send herewith a copy of the Address, delivered at the funeral of the late Mrs. CODMAN. My deep respect for Mrs. CODMAN, and my regard for friends, in behalf of whom you communicate this request, lead me to consent to the publication of that which was originally designed only for the funeral occasion.

Very truly and respectfully yours,

A. C. THOMPSON.

Roxbury, April 17, 1857.

ADDRESS.

Relatives and more immediate family friends have been to the domestic home; we all now come to this home of the sanctuary. How many times have we here seen the revered and beloved friend, sister, mother, who no longer sits in the accustomed place; whose remains only are before us! It seems but a few months—it is in reality ten years—since this place of worship was draped in mourning, and we gathered around the venerated form of the pastor, husband and father. At the same age with him—sixty-five years—his consort has fallen asleep in Jesus.

None who knew the deceased will ask for her portrait—so distinctly present to the mind is her form, uniting, in an unusual measure, dignity with grace; her mind strong, yet not masculine; her sensibilities delicate, yet not fastidious; her character firm, yet attractively feminine. Seldom is there seen such balanced energy, refinement, quick and quiet good sense, such marked and pervasive congruity.

But I do not stand here to pronounce a eulogy, though the conviction of all present would probably authorize, in this instance, what is rarely expedient on such occasions. I stand here rather to speak of the grace of God vouchsafed to her, and as your organ, my friends, to praise Him for his goodness to us through her, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

More than half a century ago was it, and at the age of fourteen, that, as she hoped, and friends believed, the great spiritual change of regeneration was wrought by the Holy Spirit, wherein she was awakened to a sense of guilt and ruin as a sinner, and was enabled to look by faith to the atoning Lamb of God. That event—the greatest, and in its consequences the most important that can be experienced by a human being, death and the resurrection not excepted—occurred at the same place, the same season, and in connection with the same favored institution, with two young friends of hers, one of whom, Harriet Atwood Newell, found an early missionary grave in the Isle of France, and the other, the heroine of Rangoon, Ann Hasseltine Judson, sleeps solitarily in the shade of a lofty Hopia tree of Burmah. In natural and special endowments a compeer with them, she commenced and continued a Christian life of great devotedness and consistency. Entire consecration to the crucified, reigning Saviour, was her avowed

and steady aim; while a devout spirit, active benevolence, great humility, great dread of hypocrisy, were conspicuous to the last. "Man is no hypocrite in his pleasures," was a frequent saying of hers; and, tested by that standard, where were her treasures and heart? The Holy Scriptures, those wells of salvation, were her constant and joyful resort, large portions of which were hid in her heart; and among the favorite, never-tiring chapters, was the fourteenth of John's Gospel, and not least, during later years, till the Master's summons in the last verse came, "Arise, let us go hence." The chief companions to the holy volume were Scott's Commentary, with some of the old English writers, Baxter's Saint's Rest particularly, and the psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs of those cunning artificers of sweet rhythm and rich Christian sentiment, Watts and Doddridge, Cowper and Montgomery. Often repeated were such as these:

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is nigh!
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide;
Oh, receive my soul at last!"

and

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

The system of evangelical doctrines and duties, set forth authoritatively in God's word, and summarily and admirably comprehended in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, had her most cordial and intelligent assent. It was by inwardly digesting the same from childhood onward, that she attained and maintained such unusual vigor and symmetry of Christian character.

That character shone forth clearly in the relations of life, as wife and neighbor, sister and mother. Richard Baxter writes: "Ought a clergyman to marry? Yes; but let him think, and think, and think again, before he does it." The late beloved pastor of this people acted upon that, when, after four years' residence and labor here, he introduced to their confidence and affection one who proved so eminently a help meet for him. The seniors present well remember that youthful bride, even then matronly, yet affable, kindly affectioned, spiritually-minded, entering at once with heart into co-operative labors with her husband; active in the female prayer-meeting, the life of a Maternal Association, distributing religious books, encouraging children and youths by appropriate presents,—how many keepsakes are still in your hands,—carrying little luxuries, making kind inquiries, sympathizing with the afflicted, watching with the sick more perhaps than any other individual in the parish, and, at the bedside of the departing, ever ready

"To hold the lamp of human love arm high,
To catch the death-strained eyes and comfort them,
Until the angels on the luminous side
Of death had got theirs ready."

The wife of a pastor and minister of Christ, in England, when expecting soon to appear before God, testified, "I have labored for the parish; yes, I have labored for the parish; and if the Lord spare my life, I will labor for it more than I have ever yet done." If there has been one this side of the Atlantic who with equal sincerity could say the same, it was she who now rests from her labors, and whose works follow her. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

A help or hinderance to him beyond any other individual is every pastor's wife; and there is not in the land, not at the capital of the nation, or elsewhere, a female position more honorable and responsible than hers. If, by her wise domestic administration; if, by the perennial flow of Christian cheerfulness; if, by well-directed, noiseless co-operation, she fill her appropriate sphere, then do the pastor and the parish owe her, under God, a debt which words can but imperfectly express.

And was not such the case eminently with our departed friend? Is there one here, who suspects exaggeration? Is there one here, in the less conspicuous walks of life, who has once dreamed that she was not equally at home with the humblest as with the highest? Never was there an incident

more characteristic, than, while visiting in another part of the State, she gracefully declined the hospitalities of the Governor of the Commonwealth, to accept those of a respected mechanic. Yet who will rise up and say, that in her social bearing or in her charities there was aught of apparent ostentation, or of affected humility?

Brethren in the ministry of reconciliation, and your wives, sisters in Christ, what shall we say, looking as we do for the last time upon that calm face, every furrow of which is dear to us? How benignant that countenance! How large that heart! What a cordial greeting did she use to give us! How quietly and queenly did she, in her sympathies, take in the whole region round about! There are brethren and sisters, fathers and mothers in Israel in distant parts of the land, as well as in England and Scotland, who with us will account themselves mourners.

Other tears have a better right than mine to-day over this precious casket; but as thoughts go back to the time when, fifteen years ago, I came a stranger and an inexperienced pastor to this vicinity, and first became acquainted with this mother in Israel; and as thoughts revert to the period of her subsequent residence within my own parish, and to the wise words which she dropped, and to the hours of blessed Christian fellowship enjoyed—my mother, oh my mother! I too must weep.

But that hallowed word, *mother*, belongs to you, the surviving, unbroken circle of sons and daughters. How devoted was your mother! What equable blending of decision and affection in her discipline! What entertaining, instructive letters did she write in her absence from home! What thoughtful, pious solicitude did she manifest at home! In her example, counsels and prayers, she has left you a legacy more ample than the wealth of the Indies.

Brothers and Sisters of the deceased, you need not be reminded of early years, of later years; of your old homestead, "The Family Bible that lay on the stand," the catechetical exercises, the domestic altar, and domestic praises. Nor do you require some one to point to yonder mansion, and recall scenes of sisterly greeting and fellowship, and remind you with what sanctified felicity of tact she was still winning more and more of your affection. The eldest of your group has now been taken. The tenement was for a time shaken, and kept trembling; but the tenant sat calm and cheerful within, till the morning of Saturday last, when

> "Her spirit, with a bound,
> Burst its encumbering clay;
> Her tent, at sunrise, on the ground
> A blackened ruin lay."

How much would heaven want, if all the aged were withdrawn! How much would earth want, if the hoary head, a crown of glory when found in the way of righteousness, were never seen; if the renewed heart, which never grows old, did not beat its complement of threescore years and ten!

The wife, neighbor, sister and mother, has departed this life. She desired rest. What weary traveler ever complained of getting home too soon? She had long been deprived of the privileges of the sanctuary; and she desired to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. To a sister who spoke of the Great Shepherd's supporting rod and staff, she said, "I feel it"—"All my trust is in Him;"—and in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection, she fell asleep in Jesus.

"Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep!
From which none ever wakes to weep!
A calm and undisturb'd repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes!

Asleep in Jesus! Oh how sweet
To be for such a slumber meet;
With holy confidence to sing
That death hath lost its venom'd sting!

Asleep in Jesus! peaceful rest!
Whose waking is supremely blest;
No fear—no woe, shall dim that hour,
That manifests the Saviour's power."